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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 008741

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [IN](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: CONGRESS PUSHES THE LEFT TO MOVE TOWARD COMPROMISE
ON THE IRAN/IAEA ISSUE

REF: A. NEW DELHI 8711

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 8681

Classified By: Political Counselor Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (U) On November 15, Communist leaders from the CPI(M) and CPI demanded that the GOI reverse its position and vote with Iran at the November 24 IAEA meeting or "face the consequences," but left the door open for face-saving "consultations," (ref A). On November 16, the GOI took advantage of the opportunity and indicated its interest in reducing confrontation with the Left on the issue. Congress President Sonia Gandhi met with CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechury to arrange for a Congress/Left Front "coordination meeting" prior to the IAEA meeting to chalk out a common position, with November 22 the most likely date. Yechury confirmed to the "Indian Express" that the Communists were interested in an "out of court settlement." Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also called his Sikh counterpart and veteran Communist leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet, whose daughter enjoyed an expensive bourgeois wedding on November 16, purportedly to prevent a Congress/Left clash when Parliament reconvenes on November 23. In an apparent sign that the Communists were reciprocating the Congress gestures, CPI(M) Parliamentary leaders provided a notice to the speaker on November 16 requesting only a short discussion of the Iran/IAEA issue when Parliament reconvenes. The Left had the option of requesting a full floor debate followed by a vote, but backed down.

[1](#)2. (U) While not revealing how the GOI would vote, the government moved to present a moderate and conciliatory tone. Saying, "I will not go into a hypothetical situation, let us see whether there is going to be a vote or not," Foreign Secretary Saran maintained that India's "stance will be

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determined by what are the contents of the resolution," while emphasizing that it "will be in accordance with the national interest." GOI Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi also backtracked from earlier confrontational statements condemning the Left for its "pressure tactics" and struck a conciliatory tone, emphasizing that the UPA would "not disappoint" any of its allies if the Iran issue came to a vote.

[1](#)3. (U) The BJP has not been able to formulate a position on the IAEA vote, allowing the LF to play the role of the opposition on this issue. In order to clear up the confusion, the BJP leadership plans to meet November 17 and determine its stance. Early indications are that the BJP will also be critical, as BJP leader Vijay Kumar Malhotra took the UPA to task for not taking all political parties into confidence before the September 24 IAEA vote.

[1](#)4. (C) In a November 17 conversation with PolCouns, PMO Media Adviser Sanjaya Baru expressed great anxiety about the prospect of an Iran vote at the IAEA, and underlined his hope that this might be avoided. He remarked that "for the next four months India's politics will be about Kerala and West Bengal," and insisted that the Left parties have chosen to use foreign policy as a wedge issue to attack Congress in those states. He acknowledged PolCoun's point that Iran is making the PM's job easier by behaving unreasonably vis-a-vis the EU-3. Nonetheless, he warned, with the Left parties appealing to the Congress base in West Bengal and Kerala, the GOI will have to weigh the political consequences of another IAEA vote.

Comment - Ambiguity for Now

[1](#)5. (C) The Congress effort at reconciliation with the LF comes as no surprise. Stung by the intense criticism engendered by the IAEA vote, Congress has no interest in further confrontation. The Communists are interested in scoring easy political points, but not in a Communist/Congress battle on the floor of Parliament that would endanger UPA stability and benefit the BJP. While both groups may be ready to step back from the brink, the issue could become explosive should the GOI again feel compelled to back an IAEA resolution that the LF deems to be too harsh on Iran and too conciliatory towards the US. This would be especially true if the GOI takes such a move without first consulting the LF and its UPA allies. Nothing would please

the UPA more than if the US, EU, and others avoided a vote on
November 24.
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